



## Report Highlights Diversity of Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Services

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MADISON – The 2011 Annual Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Impact Report from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) highlights the diversity of services available to build a stronger local food system in the state. Some, like the Vernon Economic Development Association (VEDA), have used a variety of services to move their projects forward.

“In 2009, area buyers wanted to purchase local products, but because there wasn’t a one-stop contact, they didn’t have the know-how or the money to do it,” said Sue Noble, Executive Director of VEDA. “The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin services helped launch the planning phase of the Fifth Season Cooperative and now the cooperative is building infrastructure to enhance markets and business capacity for producers and processors.”

The Fifth Season Cooperative brings producers, processors, distributors, buyers and workers together to address needs and challenges and determine a fair price for all. After the cooperative was off the ground, the business became a tenant in VEDA’s Food Enterprise Center.

“The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Program connected VEDA with the Division of Food Safety, which was a key player in certifying tenants in our new commercial kitchens at the Food Enterprise Center. These facilities help our producers add value to their products year-round,” added Noble. “VEDA also partnered with DATCP to host Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin educational workshops that area producers were able to attend to increase their business viability.”

Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin provides technical assistance to farmers and processors who are growing their agricultural businesses to serve local food markets. This year, the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program again held educational workshops across the state and webinars for producers on employee management, finances and branding. While the workshops offer classroom instruction, Producers First of the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Program offers individual assistance to help local food producers meet their goals to increase sales, be more profitable and create jobs.

“Having one contact in the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Program is very beneficial. Teresa Engel is a very knowledgeable resource who can connect you to where you need to go next,” explained Noble. “Now that the Fifth Season Cooperative is established, with help from Teresa, it serves as a model and mentor for others who want to build a regional food system.”

The Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin report highlights resources online for on-farm food safety for fresh fruit and vegetable growers. An interactive website is available for producers on best practices, and a Train the Trainer series is also available to educate University of Wisconsin- Extension professionals, who can share the word.



Fifth Season Cooperative increases access to markets by establishing critical infrastructure to overcome production, processing, marketing and distribution hurdles facing local food producers. The Fifth Season Cooperative’s buying pool includes 3,500 accounts through its distributor member, Reinhart FoodService.

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“People want to know where their food comes from, and models like the Fifth Season Cooperative help farmers diversify their business plan to what works for them to be profitable,” concluded Noble. “Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin offers the tools needed to be successful and most importantly, the energy and connections to make it happen.”

The annual report offers a comprehensive look at the resources available through Buy Local Buy Wisconsin for infrastructure development, producer development, addressing industry hurdles and statewide networking. To learn more, visit [http://datcp.wi.gov/Business/Buy\\_Local\\_Buy\\_Wisconsin](http://datcp.wi.gov/Business/Buy_Local_Buy_Wisconsin) or contact Teresa Engel, DATCP’s Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin Program Manager, at 608-224-5101 or [teresa.engel@wisconsin.gov](mailto:teresa.engel@wisconsin.gov). You can also connect with DATCP on Twitter at [twitter.com/widatcp](https://twitter.com/widatcp) or Facebook at [facebook.com/widatcp](https://facebook.com/widatcp).

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